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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION FROM
FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT

CD NO.

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY China

SUBJECT Economic - Industry, cement production

HOW PUBLISHED Semimonthly periodical

WHERE PUBLISHED Peiping

DATE PUBLISHED 10 Jan 1951

LANGUAGE Chinese

DATE OF INFORMATION 1950

DATE DIST. // Aug 1951

NO. OF PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE Hsin Kuan-ch'a (New Observer), Vol II, No 1, 1951.

PRODUCTION OF CEMENT PLANT OF THE HUA-PEI POTTERY CORPORATION

Lin Li

The Cement Plant of the Hua-pei Pottery Corporation, Ministry of Heavy Industry, is located on the Liu-li Ho, 90 miles south of Peiping on the Peiping-Hangkow Railway. It was established in 1944 under the Japanese puppet regime. The machinery was old and generally had passed its age of guaranteed use when the plant was established. In fact, the machinery came from Japan, where it could not be utilized.

There are also other unfavorable factors. Coal comes a long way from Ta-t'ung in western Chahar or Ching-hsing in Hopeh; iron ore comes from Lung-yin on the Peiping-Suiyuan line and Yang-ch'uan on the Shih-chia-chuang-T'ai-yuan line; gypsum comes from T'ai-yuan in Shansi, and limestone comes from Chou-k'ou-tien, 3 miles from the plant. The only favorable factors are the inexhaustible supply of clay and the proximity of the plant to river and rail transportation.

There are 1,346 workers and employees, two fifths the number in the New Ch'i-hsin Cement Company in T'ang-shan, but its output is equal to that of Chi'i hsin and its costs are one third less. More significant is the fact that its output in the past 11 months of 1950 was equal to the total 4-year output under the puppet government and the KMT regime.

In one building, four kilns are suspended in the air like cannons. Each kiln is 39.6 meters long, 3.4 meters in diameter, and weighs 240 tons. Each consumes tens of tons of coal daily and produces cement from the mixed raw materials -- limestone, clay, and iron particles -- at a temperature of 1,700 degrees. In contrast with the practices under the Japanese puppet and the KMT regimes two things have been accomplished. The first is to operate the four kilns at the same time, and the second is to bring the operation up to 75 percent of full capacity. It was only 50 percent under the puppet and KMT regimes.

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The maximum output for each kiln is 4.6 or 4.7 tons per hour as against the highest record of 4.07 tons in the past. The box steel (an essential part inside the kiln, so named because it resembles a box) formerly had to be changed once a week, and it took hours to let it cool off before starting repairs. Thus, each repair took at least 2 or 3 days. But now they have succeeded both in improving the quality of the box steel and in shortening the time needed to cool the kiln before repairing. At the very beginning, workers managed to work in the kiln, when it was at the high temperature of 1,000 degrees or more, by wearing a flax bag soaked in cold water. But later they applied cold water directly to the kiln as soon as it stopped operating. The active life of the box steel was extended from one week to 2 weeks and the repair time shortened from 2 or 3 days to only 17 or 18 hours. Consequently, production has risen in each kiln.

In the spring of 1950, production was still far below normal, and the original plan was only 66 percent completed. Leaders tried to find excuses by blaming the old machines and the environment. But instead of finding a prompt solution, the management appealed to Peiping for more engineers. Thus, a simple shaft repair problem was left unsolved for months. This disturbed both the Ministry of Heavy Industry and the Hua-pei Pottery Corporation. Finally, after a thorough investigation into the plant, the Pottery Corporation discovered that the real trouble was in the leadership. Appropriate changes were then made to restore efficiency.

The grinding room consists of four units. Stone is ground and mixed with dried clay and iron particle to become raw material. After this raw material has been melted and baked in the kiln, it comes back to be ground into cement. The stone-crusher now turns out 68.6 tons per hour in comparison with 30 tons formerly. The clay-drying machine processes 13.2 tons per hour, as against 6 tons before. Prior to the spring of 1950, efficiency was low and accidents were frequent. But, since April 1950, many improvements have been made.

Limestone is mined at Chou-k'ou-tien along the Liu-li Ho--Chou-k'ou-tien Railway, 30 miles from the plant. About 70 private lime-manufacturing firms occupy this area with a total of 2,000 workers. The mining area for the Liu-li Ho Cement Plant is at Lao-ku Ling, an area of 22,322 hectares, with an estimated 13 million tons of limestone. The limestone produced in 1950 equals the 4-year total under the Japanese puppet and KMT regimes. The 300-horsepower air compresser has been restored for use and, since the beginning of November 1950, an air drill has been used. Thus, a job formerly done by 1[illegible] men can now be done by two men. Workers in the mines sometimes used to number as many as 700; now there are only 170.

The cost of limestone is very low. To extract one ton of limestone costs only the equivalent of 4 catties of millet.

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